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Orosa

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(54) **TURBINE EXHAUST DIFFUSER WITH REGION OF REDUCED FLOW AREA AND OUTER BOUNDARY GAS FLOW**

(75) Inventor: **John Orosa**, Palm Beach Gardens, FL (US)

(73) Assignee: **Siemens Energy, Inc.**, Orlando, FL (US)

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F01D 17/14 (2006.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.**
USPC **415/211.2**; 415/914

(58) **Field of Classification Search**
USPC 415/914, 211.2, 142, 182.1, 224.5
See application file for complete search history.

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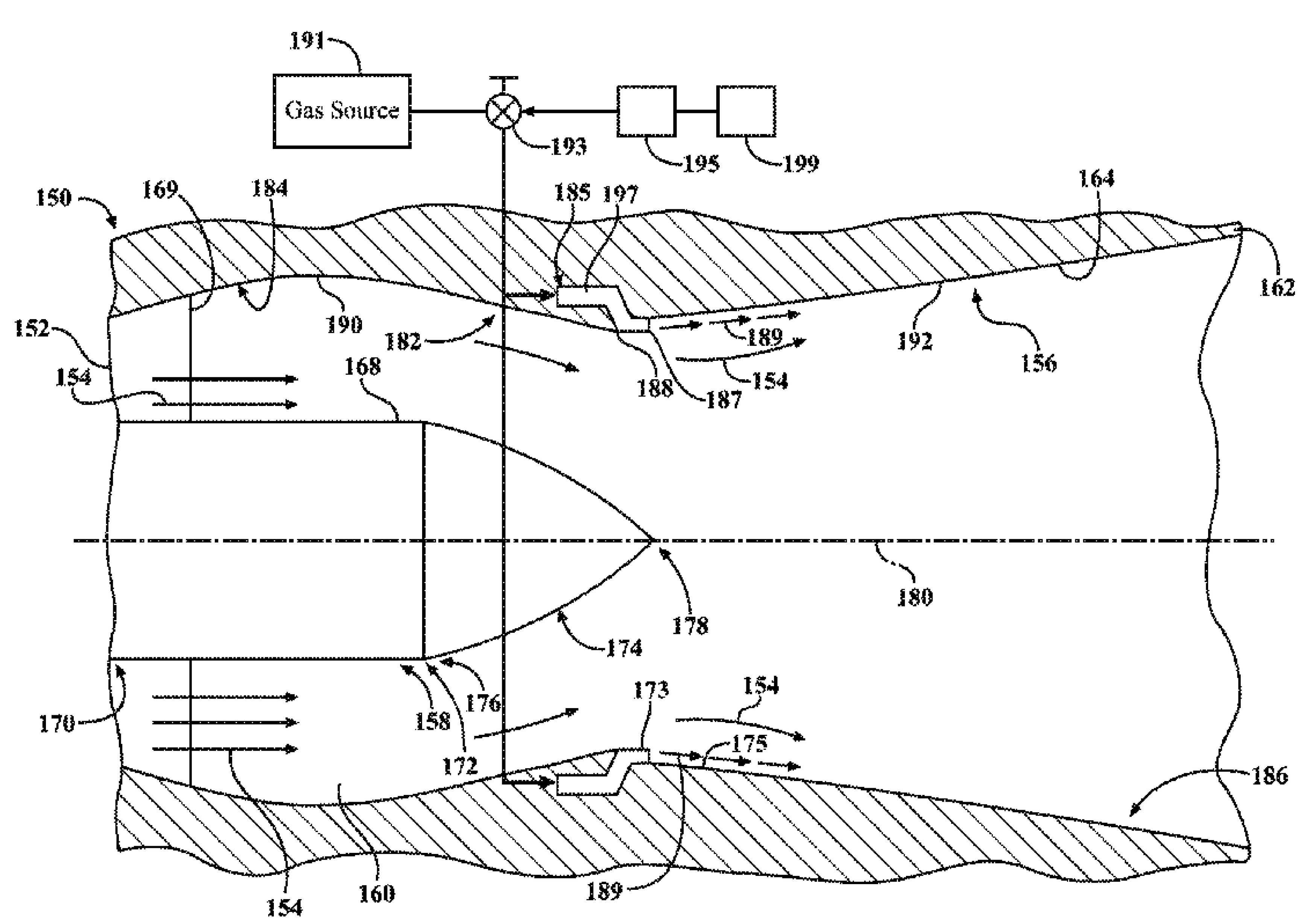
Primary Examiner — Dwayne J White

(57) **ABSTRACT**

An exhaust diffuser system and method for a turbine engine. The outer boundary may include a region in which the outer boundary extends radially inwardly toward the hub structure and may direct at least a portion of an exhaust flow in the diffuser toward the hub structure. At least one gas jet is provided including a jet exit located on the outer boundary. The jet exit may discharge a flow of gas downstream substantially parallel to an inner surface of the outer boundary to direct a portion of the exhaust flow in the diffuser toward the outer boundary to effect a radially outward flow of at least a portion of the exhaust gas flow toward the outer boundary to balance an aerodynamic load between the outer and inner boundaries.

15 Claims, 7 Drawing Sheets



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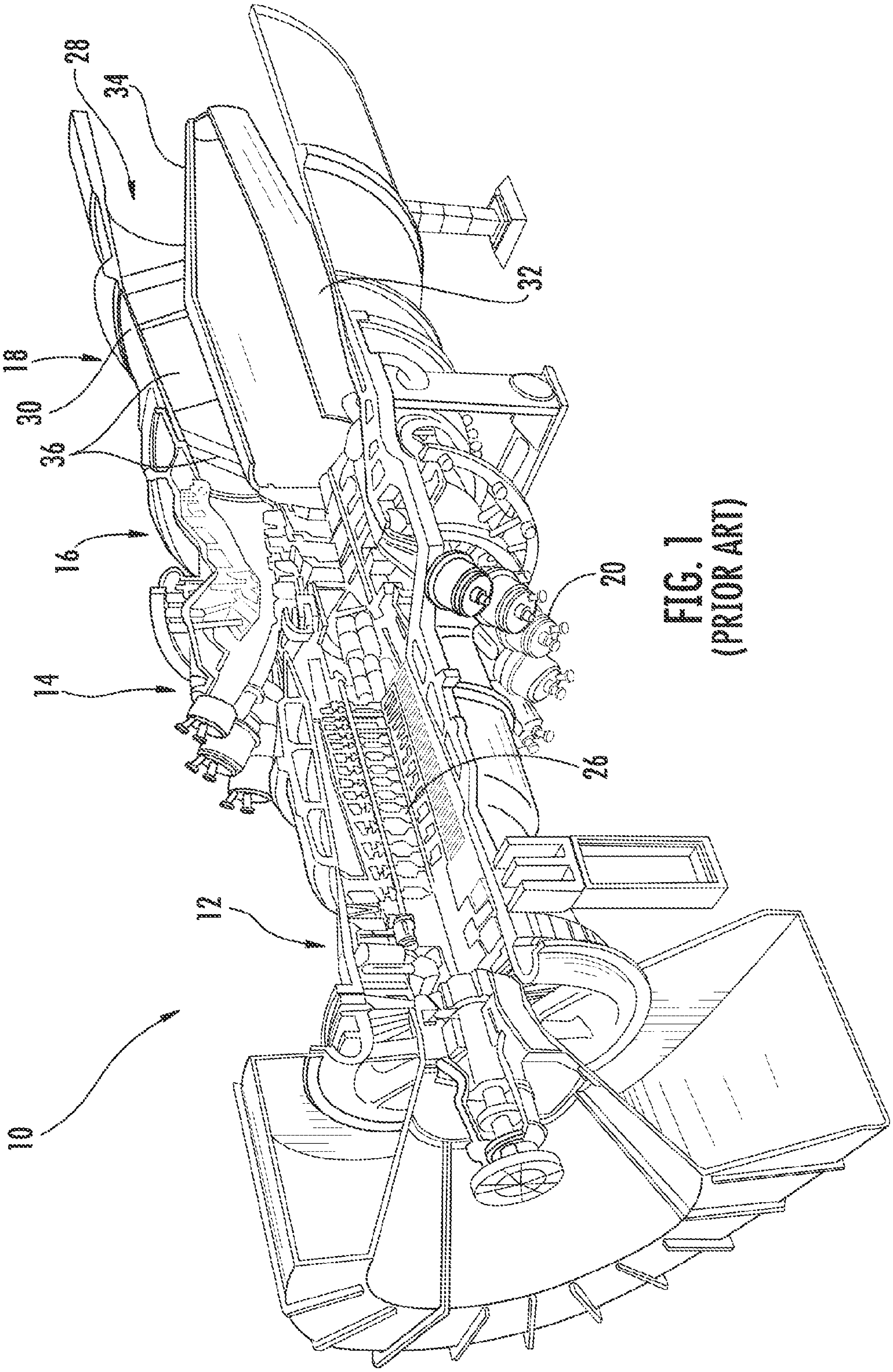


FIG. 1
(PRIOR ART)

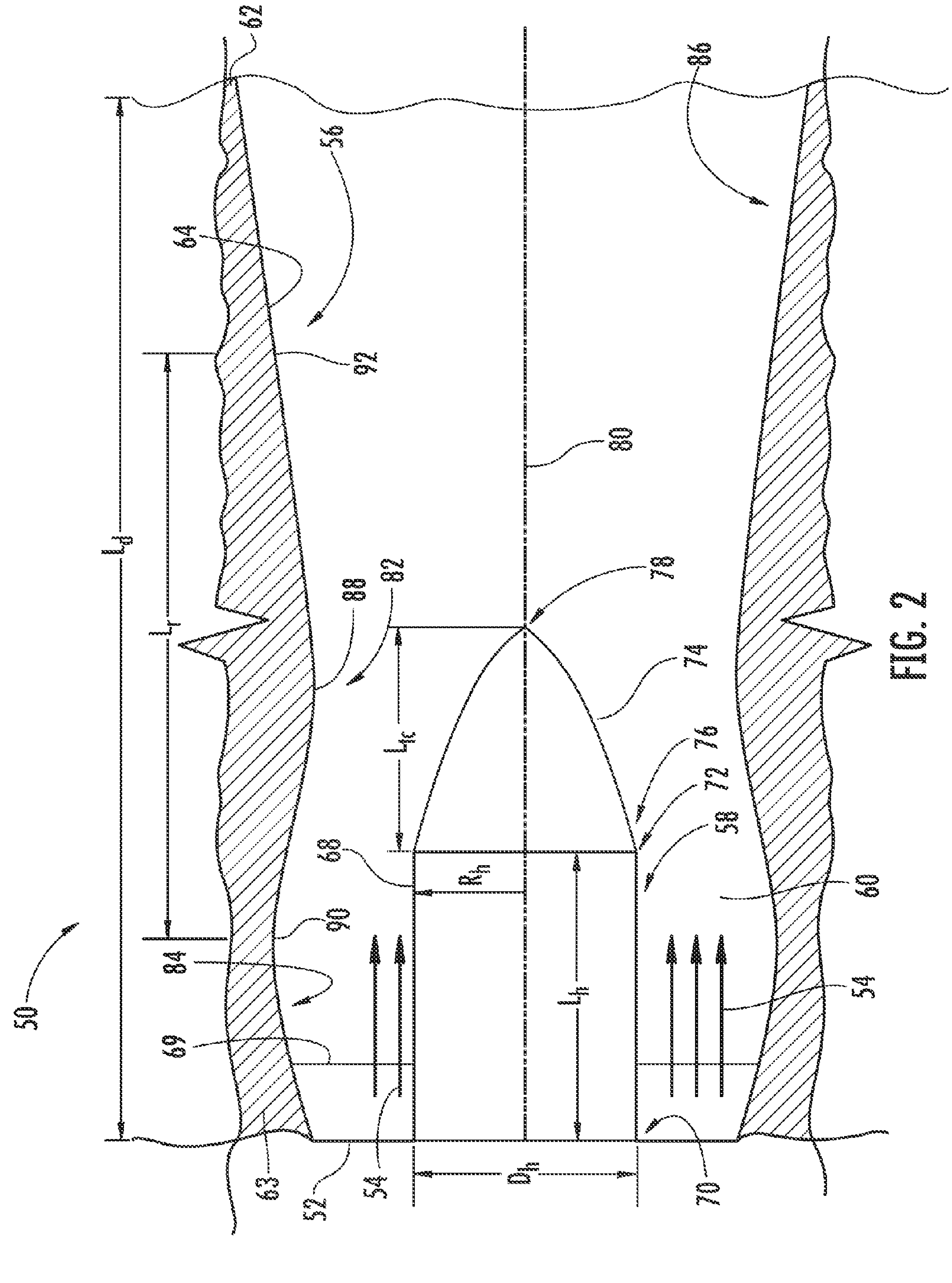

62
86
56
64
92
80
L_d
L_r
78
82
88
74
L_{fc}
76
72
58
68
R_h
60
90
84
54
50
69
L_h
63
52
54
D_h
70

FIG. 2

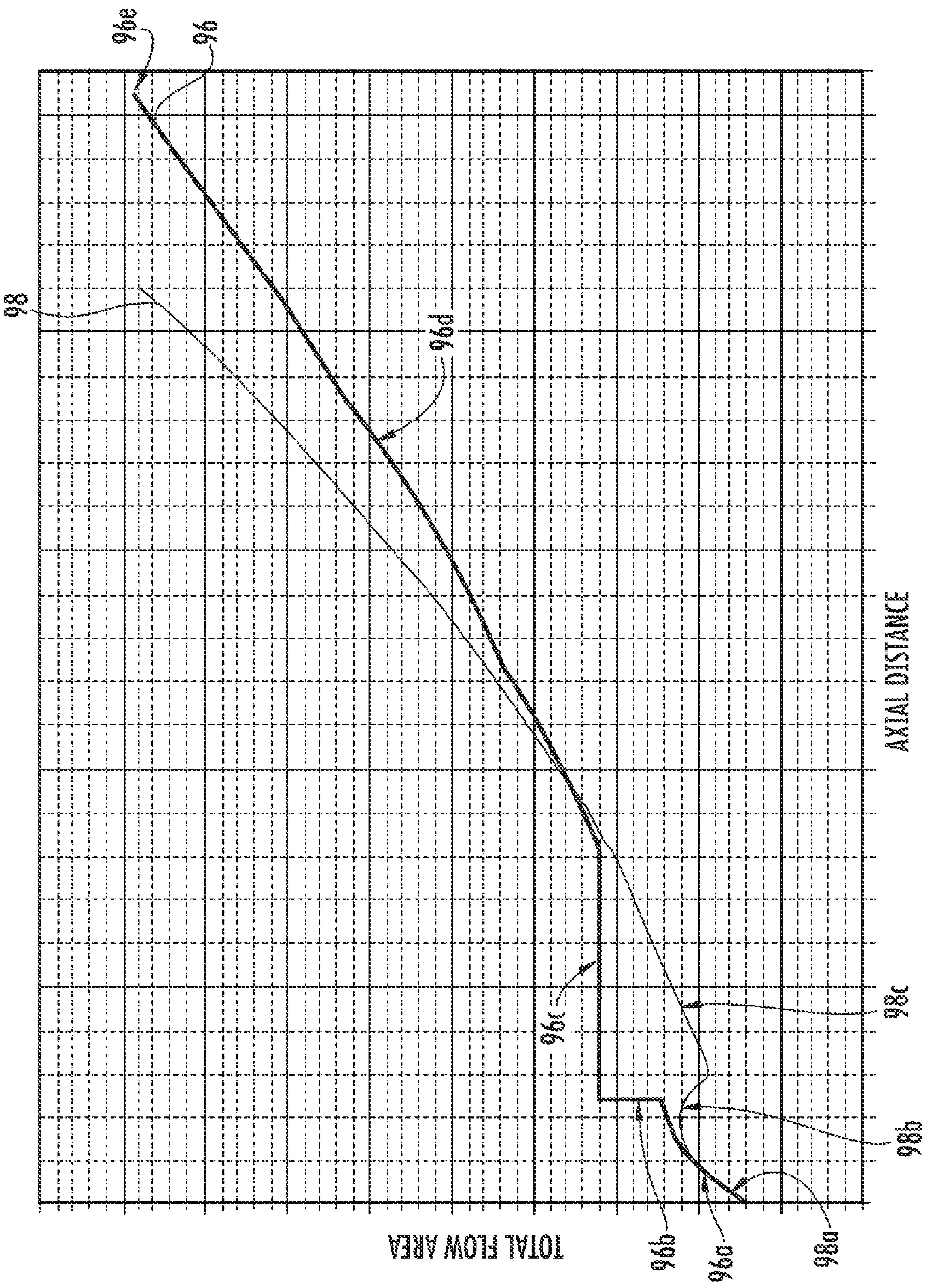

96e
96
98
96d
96c
98c
98b
96b
96a
98a
TOTAL FLOW AREA
AXIAL DISTANCE

FIG. 3

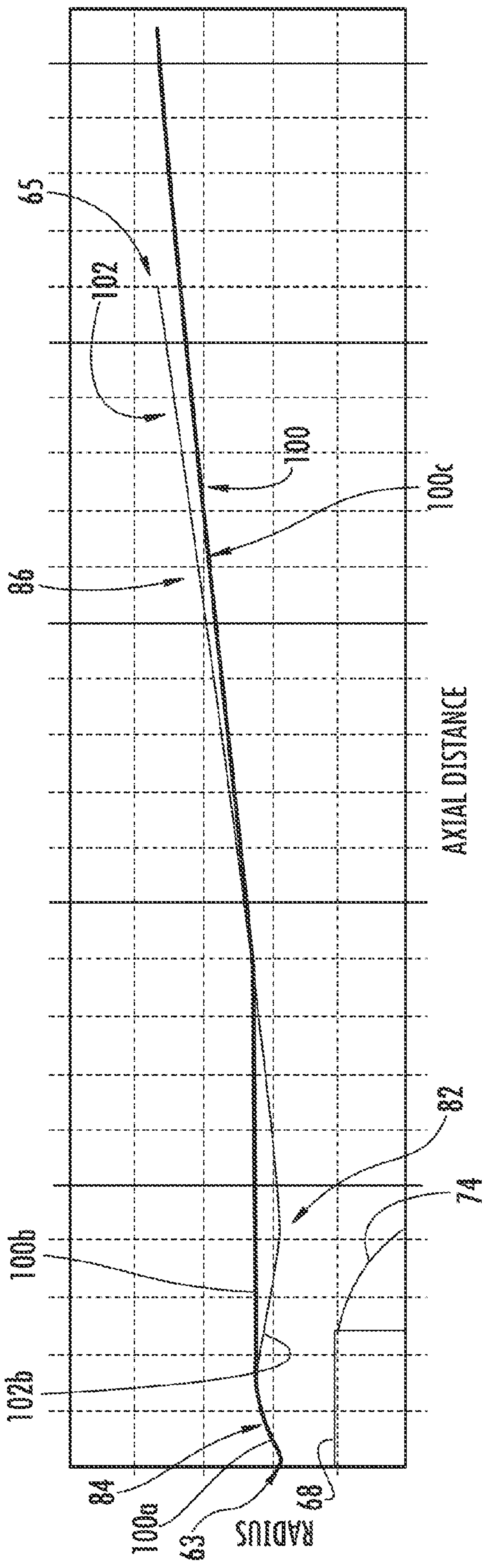
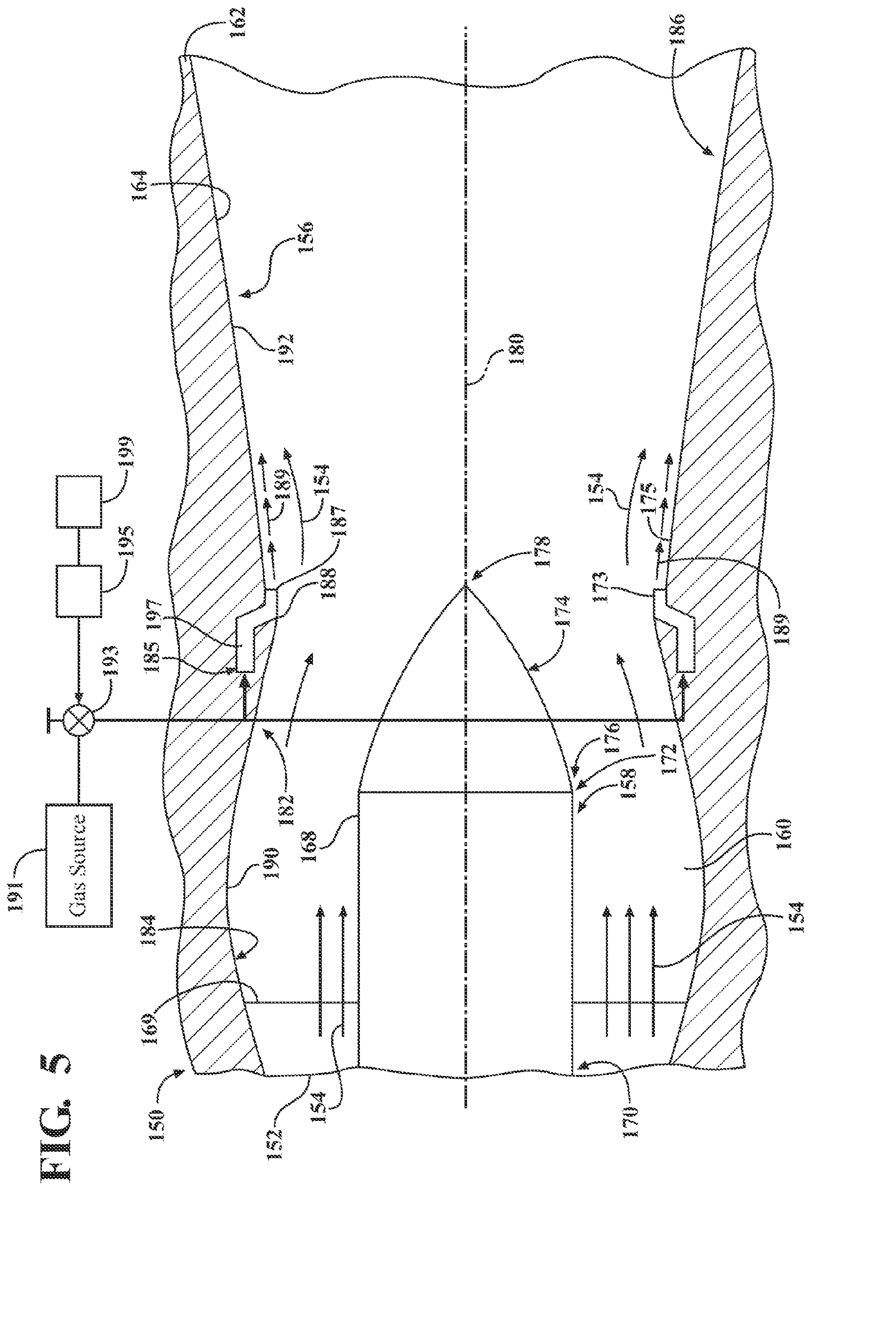

65
102
100
100c
86
AXIAL DISTANCE
82
74
100b
102b
84
100a
63
RADIUS
68

FIG. 4


Gas Source
191
193
195
197
199
150
152
154
156
158
160
162
164
168
169
170
172
173
174
175
176
178
180
182
184
185
186
187
188
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190
192

FIG. 5

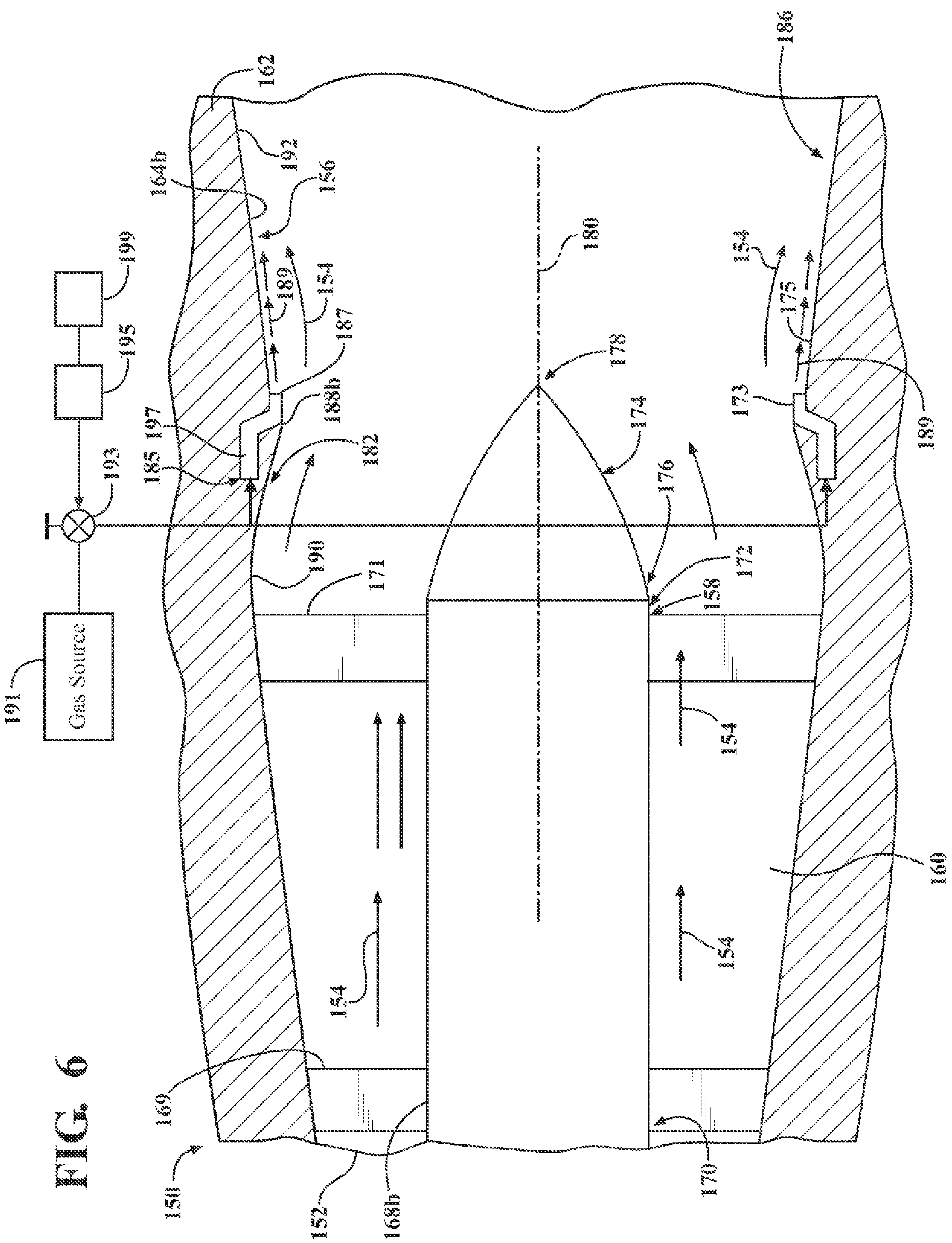
Gas Source
191
193
195
199
150
152
154
156
158
160
162
164b
168b
169
170
171
172
173
174
175
176
178
180
182
185
186
187
188b
189
190
192
197

FIG. 6

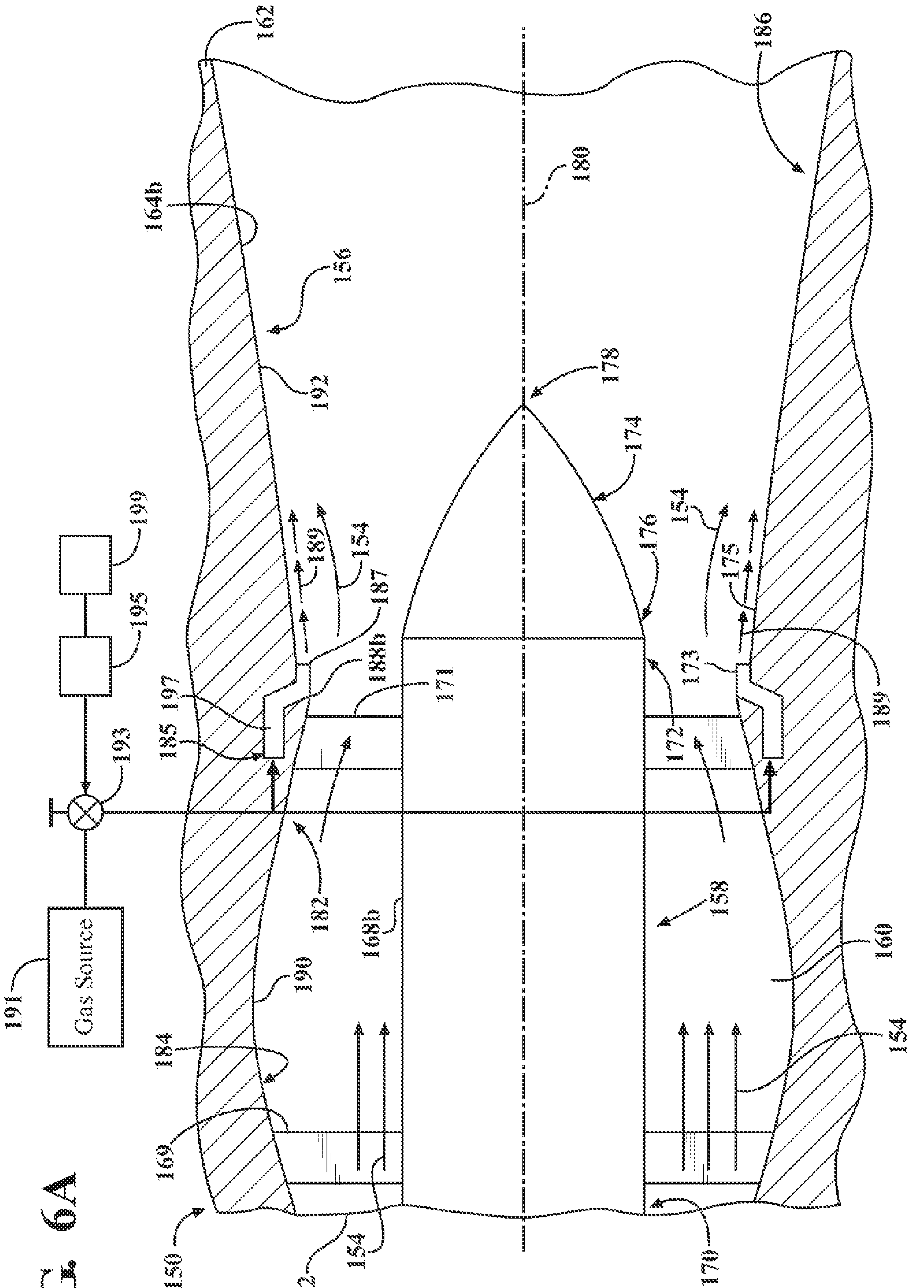

FIG. 6A

TURBINE EXHAUST DIFFUSER WITH REGION OF REDUCED FLOW AREA AND OUTER BOUNDARY GAS FLOW

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION

This application is A CONTINUATION-IN-PART APPLICATION of and claims priority to U.S. patent application Ser. No. 12/476,302, filed on Jun. 2, 2009 now U.S. Pat. No. 8,337,153, entitled "TURBINE EXHAUST DIFFUSER FLOW PATH WITH REGION OF REDUCED TOTAL FLOW AREA," the entire disclosure of which is incorporated by reference herein.

STATEMENT REGARDING FEDERALLY SPONSORED DEVELOPMENT

Development for this invention was supported in part by Contract No. DE-FC26-05NT42644, awarded by the United States Department of Energy. Accordingly, the United States Government may have certain rights in this invention.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The invention relates in general to turbine engines and, more particularly, to exhaust diffusers for turbine engines.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Referring to FIG. **1**, a turbine engine **10** generally includes a compressor section **12**, a combustor section **14**, a turbine section **16** and an exhaust section **18**. In operation, the compressor section **12** can induct ambient air and can compress it. The compressed air from the compressor section **12** can enter one or more combustors **20** in the combustor section **14**. The compressed air can be mixed with the fuel, and the air-fuel mixture can be burned in the combustors **20** to form a hot working gas. The hot gas can be routed to the turbine section **16** where it is expanded through alternating rows of stationary airfoils and rotating airfoils and used to generate power that can drive a rotor **26**. The expanded gas exiting the turbine section **16** can be exhausted from the engine **10** via the exhaust section **18**.

The exhaust section **18** can be configured as a diffuser **28**, which can be a divergent duct formed between an outer shell **30** and a center body or hub **32** and a tail cone **34**. The exhaust diffuser **28** can serve to reduce the speed of the exhaust flow and thus increase the pressure difference of the exhaust gas expanding across the last stage of the turbine. In some prior turbine exhaust sections, exhaust diffusion has been achieved by progressively increasing the cross-sectional area of the exhaust duct in the fluid flow direction, thereby expanding the fluid flowing therein.

It is preferable to minimize disturbances in the exhaust diffuser fluid flow; otherwise, the performance of the diffuser **28** can be adversely affected. Such disturbances in the fluid flow can arise for various reasons, including, for example, boundary layer separation. If fluid flow proximate a diffuser wall (the boundary layer) separates from the wall, there is a loss in the diffusing area and pressure recovery is reduced. Generally, the larger the angle of divergence in a diffuser, the greater the likelihood that flow separation will occur.

One approach to minimizing flow separation is to provide a diffuser with a relatively long hub. A long hub can maximize performance by delaying the dump losses—flow losses that occur at the downstream end of the hub/tail cone—to a point when the exhaust gases are traveling at a lower velocity, thereby minimizing the strength of the hub/tail cone's wakes in the flow. However, a long hub presents a disadvantage in that it can make the engine design more complicated and expensive. For instance, a longer hub typically requires two rows of support struts **36**—one in an upstream region of the hub **32** and one in a downstream region of the hub **32**, as shown in FIG. **1**. These support struts **36** can increase cost and the risk of material cracking due to thermal mismatch between inner and outer flowpath parts or vibratory loads. Further, long hubs can pose challenges in instances where available space is limited.

Another approach to minimizing flow separation losses is to provide a diffuser with a relatively short hub length followed by a reduced divergence angle. This approach can minimize cost by, among other things, requiring only a single row of support struts. However, diffuser performance may suffer because this design can often lead to high dump losses from having the hub end (sudden expansion) further upstream in the diffuser where the flow velocities are higher. To avoid a second set of struts, associated tail cones are often steep (or omitted entirely), causing wakes to form in the flow downstream of the hub/tail cone which can continue to grow downstream.

Thus, there is a need for an exhaust diffuser that can achieve the performance benefits of a long hub design while enjoying the reduced cost and risk of a short hub design.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

In accordance with an aspect of the invention, an exhaust diffuser for a turbine engine may be provided comprising an inner boundary defined at least by a hub. The hub may include an upstream end and a downstream end. An outer boundary may be defined by a diffuser shell, the outer boundary being radially spaced from the inner boundary so that a flow path is defined therebetween. The outer boundary comprises a radially inwardly extending region in which the outer boundary extends radially inwardly toward the inner boundary. The radially inwardly extending region begins at a point that is one of substantially aligned and proximately upstream of the downstream end of the hub, whereby the outer boundary directs at least a portion of an exhaust flow in the diffuser toward the hub. At least one gas jet is provided including a jet exit located on the outer boundary. The jet exit may discharge a flow of gas downstream substantially parallel to an inner surface of the outer boundary to effect a radially outward flow of a portion of the exhaust flow in the diffuser toward the outer boundary.

In accordance with another aspect of the invention, a method of exhaust diffusion in a turbine engine is provided comprising the steps of: providing a turbine engine having a turbine section and an exhaust diffuser section, the exhaust diffuser section including an inner boundary defined at least by a hub having an upstream end and a downstream end, the exhaust diffuser section further including an outer boundary radially spaced from the inner boundary so that a flow path is defined therebetween; supplying turbine exhaust gas flow to the flow passage; directing at least a portion of the exhaust flow radially inwardly toward one of the downstream end of the hub or proximately upstream of the downstream end of the hub; and providing a flow of gas discharged into the flow path parallel to the outer boundary to effect a radially outward flow of at least a portion of the exhaust gas flow toward the outer boundary to balance an aerodynamic loading between the outer and inner boundaries.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

While the specification concludes with claims particularly pointing out and distinctly claiming the present invention, it is believed that the present invention will be better understood from the following description in conjunction with the accompanying Drawing Figures, in which like reference numerals identify like elements, and wherein:

FIG. **1** is a perspective view partially in cross-section of a known turbine engine;

FIG. **2** is a side elevation cross-sectional view of an exhaust diffuser section of a turbine engine configured in accordance with aspects of the invention;

FIG. **3** is a graph showing the variation in the total flow area of an exhaust diffuser flow path along the axial length of an exhaust diffuser section, comparing one embodiment of an exhaust diffuser section configured in accordance with aspects of the invention to a known exhaust diffuser section;

FIG. **4** is a graph of the profile of an inner boundary and an outer boundary of an exhaust diffuser flow path along the axial length of an exhaust diffuser section, comparing one embodiment of the outer boundary profile of an exhaust diffuser section configured in accordance with aspects of the invention to the outer boundary profile of a known exhaust diffuser section;

FIG. **5** is a side elevation cross-sectional view of an exhaust diffuser section of a turbine engine configured in accordance with aspects of the invention, including an exit jet providing an outer boundary gas flow;

FIG. **6** is a side elevation cross-sectional view of an exhaust diffuser section of a turbine engine configured in accordance with aspects of the invention, including the exit jet configuration of FIG. **5** and comprising an alternative long configuration for the hub; and

FIG. **6**A is a side elevation cross-sectional view similar to FIG. **6** with an innermost point of the outer diffuser boundary illustrated at an upstream location.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

In the following detailed description of the preferred embodiment, reference is made to the accompanying drawings that form a part hereof, and in which is shown by way of illustration, and not by way of limitation, a specific preferred embodiment in which the invention may be practiced. It is to be understood that other embodiments may be utilized and that changes may be made without departing from the spirit and scope of the present invention.

Embodiments of the invention are directed to an exhaust diffuser system, which can increase the power and efficiency of a turbine engine. Aspects of the invention will be explained in connection with various possible configurations, but the detailed description is intended only as exemplary. Embodiments of the invention are shown in FIGS. **2-6** and **6**A, but the present invention is not limited to the illustrated structure or application.

FIG. **2** shows a portion of the exhaust diffuser section **50** of a turbine engine configured in accordance with aspects of the invention. The exhaust diffuser section **50** is downstream of and in fluid communication with the turbine section (not shown) of the engine. The exhaust diffuser **50** has an inlet **52** that can receive gases **54** exiting from the turbine section. The exhaust diffuser section **50** can include an outer boundary **56** and an inner boundary **58**. The outer boundary **56** is radially spaced from the inner boundary **58** such that a flow path **60** is defined between the inner and outer boundaries **56**, **58**. The flow path **60** can be generally annular or can have other suitable conformation. At least a portion of the flow path **60** can be generally conical.

The outer boundary **56** can be defined by a diffuser shell **62**. The diffuser shell **62** can include an inner peripheral surface **64**. The inner peripheral surface **64** can define the outer boundary **56** of the flow path **60**. The diffuser shell **62** can define the axial length L_d (only a portion of which is shown in FIG. **2**) of the exhaust diffuser **50**. The axial length L_d can extend from an upstream end **63** of the diffuser shell **62** to a downstream end **65** of the diffuser shell **62** (see FIG. **4**).

The inner boundary **58** can be defined by a center body, also referred to as a hub **68**. The hub **68** can be generally cylindrical. The hub **68** can include an upstream end **70** and a downstream end **72**. The terms "upstream" and "downstream" are intended to refer to the general position of these items relative to the direction of fluid flow through the exhaust diffuser section **50**. The hub **68** can be connected to the diffuser shell **62** by a plurality of support struts **69**, which can be arranged in circumferential alignment in a row.

The hub **68** can have an associated axial length L_h, radius R_h and diameter D_h. An exhaust diffuser section configured according to aspects of the invention can have a shorter axial length compared to prior designs. In one embodiment, the axial length L_h of the hub **68** can be about 2.2 to about 2.4 times the hub radius R_h. Because of its axial compactness, the hub **68** may only need to be supported by a single row of support struts **69**. The axial length L_h of the hub **68** can be from about 10 percent to about 12 percent of axial length L_d of the exhaust diffuser **50**. However, it should be noted that in accordance with a further aspect of the invention associated with flow control comprising an exit jet providing an outer boundary gas flow, described below with reference to FIGS. **6** and **6**A, a longer hub and additional support struts may be provided.

The inner boundary **58** can also be defined by a tail cone **74**. The tail cone can have an upstream end **76** and a downstream end **78**. The tail cone **74** can have an associated axial length L_{tc}. The tail cone **74** can be attached to the downstream end **72** of the hub **68** in any suitable manner. The hub **68** and the tail cone **74** can be substantially concentric with the diffuser shell **62** and can share a common longitudinal axis **80**.

Preferably, the tail cone **74** tapers from the upstream end **76** to the downstream end **78** in as short of an axial distance as possible. In one embodiment, the axial length L_{tc} of the tail cone **74** can be from about 1 to about 2 times the hub radius R_h. More particularly, the axial length L_{tc} of the tail cone **74** can be about 1.5 to about 2 times the hub radius R_h. Alternatively or in addition, the axial length L_{tc} of the tail cone **74** can be about 70 to about 85 percent of the axial length L_h of the hub **68**.

According to aspects of the invention, the outer boundary **56** can be configured to direct at least a portion of the exhaust flow **54** toward the hub **68**. To that end, outer boundary **56**, such as diffuser shell **62**, can be configured to achieve such a result. For instance, the outer boundary **56** can include a region **82** that extends generally radially inwardly toward the hub **68**. The term "radially" and variants thereof are used herein to mean relative to the longitudinal axis **80**. The region **82** can be formed in any suitable manner. For instance, the region **82** can be formed by one or more contours in the inner peripheral surface **64**, by a protrusion extending from the inner peripheral surface **64**, and/or by a separate piece attached to the inner peripheral surface **64** in any suitable manner. The region **82** can extend circumferentially or otherwise peripherally about the inner peripheral surface **64** of the diffuser shell **62**. The outer boundary **56** can initially include an initial diverging region **84** that transitions into the radially inwardly extending region **82**, which can later transition into a second diverging region **86**.

The radially inwardly extending region **82** can have any suitable conformation. In one embodiment, the region **82** can have a generally semi-circular cross-sectional profile. Alternatively, the region **82** can have a generally semi-elliptical, generally parabolic, generally triangular, generally trapezoidal or generally semi-polygonal cross-sectional profile, just to name a few possibilities. The region **82** can have curved or rounded features or rounded edges to minimize flow disruptions.

The region **82** can have an associated beginning point **90**. It will be understood that the beginning point **90** of the region **82** is the point at which the outer boundary **56** starts to move radially inward toward the inner boundary **58**. In one embodiment, the region **82** can begin at a point that is substantially aligned with the downstream end **72** of the hub **68**. Alternatively, the region **82** can begin at a point that is proximately upstream of the downstream end **72** of the hub **68**. For instance, the region **82** can begin upstream of the downstream end **72** of the hub **68** within a distance of less than about one half of the hub diameter D_h from the downstream end **72** of the hub **68**.

The outer boundary **56** can continue to move radially inward toward the inner boundary **58** until a radially innermost point **88** of the region **82** is reached. In one embodiment, the radially innermost point **88** of the region **82** can be substantially aligned with the downstream end **78** of the tail cone **74**. Alternatively, the radially innermost point **88** of the region **82** can be proximately upstream of the downstream end **78** of the tail cone **74**. For instance, the radially innermost point **88** of the region **82** can be upstream of the downstream end **78** of the tail cone **74** within a distance of less than about one half of the length L_{tc} of the tail cone **74**. Alternatively or in addition to the above, the radially innermost point **88** of the region **82** can be downstream of the downstream end **72** of the hub **68** within a distance of less than about 1 to about 1.5 times the hub diameter D_h.

The reduction in diameter of the outer boundary **56** from the beginning **90** of the region **82** to the radially innermost point **88** of the region can be from about 10 to about 20 percent. In one embodiment, the diameter of the outer boundary **56** at the radially innermost point **88** of the region **82** can be substantially equal to the diameter of the outer boundary **56** at the exhaust diffuser inlet **52**. In another embodiment, the diameter of the outer boundary **56** at the radially innermost point **88** of the region **82** can be less than the diameter of the outer boundary **56** at the exhaust diffuser inlet **52**.

The overall axial length L_r of the region **82** can be from about 2 to about 3 times the hub diameter D_h. More particularly, the overall axial length L_r of the region **82** can be about 2.5 times the hub diameter D_h. The axial length L_r of the region **82** is the axial distance between the beginning point **90** of the region **82**, as described above, and the ending point **92** of the region **82**, which can be the point at which the outer boundary **56** returns to the same diameter that it had at the beginning point **90** of the region **82**.

The flow path **60** can have an associated flow area that varies over the axial length L_d of the exhaust diffuser **50**. FIG. **3** shows one example of how the total area of the exhaust diffuser flow path **60** can change along the axial length L_d of the exhaust diffuser **50**. More particularly, FIG. **3** graphically depicts the total flow area profile along the axial length of the exhaust diffuser, comparing the profile of one embodiment of an exhaust diffuser according to aspects of the invention, shown at **98**, to the profile of a known exhaust diffuser design, shown at **96**. FIG. **3** is presented as dimensionless because the actual dimensions will vary depending on the particular system and application and further because it is the relative ratios and/or percentages between various features and/or attributes of the components that are of significance.

Referring to profile **96**, it can be seen that in a prior exhaust diffuser there was an initial expansion of flow area **96*a***. The total flow area dramatically increases in a region **96*b***, which coincides with the end of the inner boundary and remains at a constant total flow area **96*c*** for some distance. This constant flow area **96*c*** is indicative that the diameter of the outer boundary is held constant for a certain length in order to allow wakes that form in the flow downstream of the end of the hub to be resolved before continuing the diffusion. The region of constant flow area **96*c*** transitions into a region **96*d*** in which the total flow area progressively increases until the downstream end **96*e*** of the diffuser is reached.

In contrast, profile **98** of an exhaust diffuser configured according to aspects of the invention includes an initial region of expanding total flow area **98*a***, which transitions to a region **98*b*** in which the flow area decreases. As noted above, region **98*b*** can correspond with the beginning of the radially inwardly extending region **82** of the outer boundary **56**. Having a region of reduced flow area **98*b*** at the end of the tail cone **74** and/or hub **68** can help to minimize wake formation from the hub/tail cone (**68**, **74**) by directing flow towards the centerline **80** to close or fill in the wake quickly and with less pressure loss in the flow. The region of reduced flow area **98*b*** can transition to a region in which the flow area increases **98*c***. The reduced flow area region **98*b*** can allow the outer boundary to have a more aggressive diffusion angle, which results in an appreciably greater total flow area. As shown in FIG. **3**, the difference in flow area between the prior and proposed designs can be significant, particularly in the far downstream regions.

Because the outer boundary **56** of the flow path **60** moves radially inward in the region **82**, the total flow area of the flow path **60** can be maintained or reduced at or near the downstream end **72** of the hub **68** or the tail cone **74**. In one embodiment, the total flow area can be reduced by about 10 percent near the tail cone **74** before it begins to increase again. The exact amount and location of the flow area reduction can be tailored to the flow conditions prevalent in the particular application. For example, the diffuser inlet velocity distribution in the radial direction can have an impact on the tendency of the flow along the hub to separate, which will in turn affect the amount of flow path pinching necessary to maintain an acceptable level of hub flow.

Now that the individual components of the exhaust system according to aspects of the invention have been described, one manner in which the system can operate will be explained. During engine operation, gases **54** exiting the turbine section of the engine are passed through the exhaust diffuser **50**. As the gases **54** encounter the region **82**, the outer boundary **56** can direct at least a portion of the exhaust flow **54** toward the hub **68**. The reduced total flow area can help to accelerate the exhaust flow on the tail cone **74** and can further reduce the likelihood of flow separation or dump losses at the end of the hub and increased pressure loss. Increasing flow velocity at the downstream end **72** of the hub **68** allows its flow path shape (tail-cone) to be tapered quickly to a small radius and truncated in a short distance without any significant flow separations.

With relatively lower hub losses, it may be possible to increase the expansion angle of the exhaust diffuser **50** downstream of the region **82**. In one embodiment, the angle can be at about 6 degrees relative to the longitudinal axis **80**. An increased diffuser angle can help to achieve a shorter overall length of the diffuser section L_d. For instance, it is estimated that the overall reduction in length L_d of the exhaust diffuser **50** can be about 15-20% compared to prior designs.

FIG. **4** shows some of the potential differences in outer boundary profile, axial length and divergence angle between an exhaust diffuser configured according to aspects of the invention and known exhaust diffusers. It is noted that FIG. **4** is presented as dimensionless because the actual dimensions will vary depending on the particular system and application and further because it is the relative ratios and/or percentages between features or attributes of the components that are of significance. The outer boundary profile of a known exhaust diffuser is shown at **100**; an outer boundary profile of an exhaust diffuser configured in accordance with aspects of the invention is shown at **102**.

Both profiles **100**, **102** begin with an initially diverging region **100***a*, **84**, respectively. The initial region **100***a* of the known diffuser transitions to a region of a constant radius **100***b*, whereas, in contrast, the initial region **84** of a diffuser configured according to aspects of the invention transitions to the radially inwardly extending region **82**. The region **82** transitions to the second diverging region **86**, while, at this same point, the profile **100** of the known diffuser is still configured as a constant radius region **100***b*. Eventually, the constant radius region **100***b* of the known diffuser transitions to an expanding radius region **100***c*. However, it can be readily seen that the expansion angle of the exhaust diffuser according to aspects of the invention is more aggressive than the expansion angle of the known design, thereby achieving sufficient diffusion in a shorter distance so as to permit a short diffuser overall.

FIG. **5** illustrates an additional aspect of the invention, in which elements corresponding to previously described aspects are labeled with the same reference numeral increased by **100**.

Referring to FIG. **5**, an exhaust diffuser section **150** of a turbine engine is illustrated and includes an inlet **152** for receiving gases exiting from the turbine section of the engine. The diffuser section **150** further comprises an outer boundary **156** defined by an inner peripheral surface **164** of a diffuser shell **162**, and an inner boundary **158** defined by a center body comprising a hub **168** and a tail cone **174**. A flow path **160** is defined between the outer boundary **156** and the inner boundary **158**. The outer boundary **156** can have a configuration to direct at least a portion of the exhaust gas radially inwardly toward the hub **168**, as described above with regard to the outer boundary **56**.

The hub **168** may have a generally cylindrical cross-section. Further, the hub **168** may include an upstream end **170** and a downstream end **172**, and the tail cone **174** may include an upstream end **176** located adjacent to the downstream end **172** of the hub **168** and include a downstream end **178**. The tail cone **174** may comprise a shape that tapers radially inwardly toward an axis **180** of the diffuser section **150**. Aspects of the hub **168** and tail cone **174** may be substantially similar to those described above with regard to the inner boundary **58**.

As discussed above with regard to aspects of the outer boundary **56**, the outer boundary **156** may include a region **182** in which the outer boundary **156** extends radially inwardly toward the inner boundary **158**. The region **182** may begin at a point that is one of substantially aligned with and proximately upstream of the downstream end **178** of the hub structure, whereby the outer boundary **156** directs at least a portion of the exhaust flow **154** in the diffuser section **150** toward the inner boundary **158**.

In accordance with a particular aspect of the outer boundary **156**, at least one gas jet **185** may be provided on the outer boundary **156**. The gas jet **185** may include a jet exit **187** located on or within the diffuser shell **162** adjacent to an upstream end of a diverging region **186**. The jet exit **187** may be formed in a section of the inner surface **164** at or adjacent to the diverging region **186**, such as by a lip portion **173** having a diameter less than the diameter of a downstream local surface **175** in the diverging region **186**. As shown in FIG. **5**, the jet exit **187** may be located proximate to the innermost point **188**. However, it should be understood that a preferred location for the jet exit **187** may lie within a range extending between a location proximate to the innermost point **188**, including slightly upstream of the innermost point **188**, and a location found at an axial distance downstream of the innermost point **188** that is approximately equal to the radius of the innermost point **188**. The jet exit **187** is oriented to discharge an outer boundary gas flow **189** downstream at and substantially parallel to the local surface **175** of the diverging region **186** to cause at least a portion of the exhaust flow **154** to be directed toward the outer boundary **156**. The jet exit **187** receives a flow of gas, such as air, from a gas source **191** which is configured to supply the outer boundary gas flow **189** at a predetermined pressure to the jet exit **187**. The gas source **191** may be any supply of gas including, for example, a bleed off of air from the compressor section of the turbine, combustion gas from further downstream in the diffuser, and/or a separate supply of gas external to the turbine engine. The mass flow of the outer boundary gas flow **189** from the gas source **191** may be varied, depending on predetermined operating conditions, such as by control of a valve **193** which may be controlled by a system controller **195** for the turbine engine, as described further below.

The outer boundary gas flow **189** from the gas source **191** may be provided to an annular chamber **197** extending circumferentially within the diffuser shell **162**. Further, the jet exit **187** may comprise an annular slot extending around the circumference of the diffuser shell **162**, and in fluid communication with the annular chamber **197**, to provide a substantially uniform outer boundary gas flow **189** out of the jet exit **187** to the local surface **175** of the diverging region **186**. Alternatively, the jet exit **187** may comprise a plurality of jet exit openings and/or the annular chamber **197** may comprise a plurality of chambers for supplying the outer boundary gas flow **189** to the jet exit **187**. Preferably, the outer boundary gas flow **189** is uniformly distributed around the circumference of the inner surface **164**.

In accordance with an aspect of the invention, the outer boundary gas flow **189** comprises a high speed flow of gas out of the jet exit **187** at or proximate to a location where the inner surface **164** of the diverging region **186** turns radially outwardly extending in the downstream direction. The jet exit **187** is configured to direct the outer boundary gas flow **189** in a downstream longitudinal or axial direction that is preferably initially substantially parallel to the axis **180** of the diffuser section **150** or extending at an angle radially outwardly from the axis **180**, depending on the local orientation of the local surface **175**, to direct a thin jet formed by the outer boundary gas flow **189** substantially parallel to the local surface **175** at an upstream end of the diverging region **186** adjacent to the jet exit **187**. That is, a thin jet sheet formed by the outer boundary gas flow **189** flows out of the jet exit **187** generally parallel to the exhaust flow **154** and parallel to the adjacent local surface **175**. The outer boundary gas flow **189** may operate to energize the boundary layer adjacent to the local surface **175** of the diverging region **186** to decrease the tendency of the exhaust flow **154** to detach from the local surface **175** and improve the performance of the diverging region **186** to increase the static pressure recovery of the exhaust diffuser section **150**. As the velocity of the outer boundary gas flow **189** is increased across the jet exit **187**, the performance of the gas flow **189** to draw the flow of exhaust gas **154** outwardly to follow the contour of the local surface **175** increases. The mass flow of gas provided by the outer boundary gas flow **189** from the jet exit **187** may be in a range from about 1% to about 4% of the mass flow of gas comprising the exhaust flow **154** passing through the flow path **160**. Further, the outer boundary gas flow **189** from the jet exit **187** is preferably discharged at a velocity that is greater than a velocity of the exhaust flow **154** in the diffuser section **150** flowing adjacent to the local surface **175**.

In accordance with aspects of the invention, the flow path **160** has an associated total flow area that varies along a length of the diffuser section **150**, and the radially inwardly extending region **182** decreases the total flow area along at least a portion of the tail cone **174**, causing at least a portion of the exhaust flow **154** to be directed radially inwardly toward the inner boundary **158** and, in particular, toward the tail cone **174**. Further, the energizing of the boundary layer along the local surface **175**, as produced by the gas flow **189** out of the jet exit **187**, functions to cause at least a portion of the exhaust flow **154** to remain substantially attached to the local surface **175**, i.e., the outer boundary gas flow **189** causes the exhaust flow **154** to follow the contour of the local surface **175** radially outwardly, which may be controlled to balance an aerodynamic loading between the outer and inner boundaries **156**, **158** and related to the static pressure rise along each of the outer and inner boundaries **156**, **158**. That is, the outer boundary gas flow **189** may be used to effect a radially outward flow of a portion of the exhaust flow **154** in the diverging region **186** toward the outer boundary **156** to offset or balance, when necessary, a portion of the exhaust flow **154** directed radially inwardly toward the hub/cone **168**, **174** and induce a more uniform flow distribution throughout the diffuser section **150** in order to achieve higher diffuser performance (i.e., static pressure recovery) and/or to allow a reduction in the overall length of the diffuser section **150** without losing performance.

In accordance with a further aspect associated with the outer boundary gas flow **189** provided from the jet exit **187**, the strength of the effect provided by the outer boundary gas flow **189** may be adjusted or varied to optimize the performance of the turbine engine with varying operating conditions, such as varying exhaust gas flow properties. As a portion of the exhaust flow **154** is directed radially inwardly by the region **182**, the exhaust flow **154** passing through the flow path **160** may be directed away from the inner surface **164** within the diverging region **186**. Furthermore, under certain operating conditions, an exhaust flow condition may exist corresponding to a non-uniform velocity profile of the exhaust flow **154**, or velocity profile of reduced uniformity, between the outer and inner boundaries **156**, **158**. This non-uniform velocity profile of the exhaust flow **154** may increase the likelihood of flow separating from the inner surface **164** within the diverging region **186**. To avoid creating a separation of the exhaust flow **154** and/or creating a non-uniform velocity profile within the diverging region **186**, under certain operating conditions it may be necessary to increase the mass flow or velocity of the outer boundary gas flow **189** in order to increase the influence of the outer boundary gas flow **189** in drawing the exhaust flow **154** toward the outer boundary **156**.

For example, as the inlet temperature of the air entering the turbine engine changes, such as an ambient air temperature that may be measured at a sensor **199** providing a sensor input to the controller **195**, the tendency of the exhaust flow **154** to flow radially outwardly along the inner surface **164** within the diverging region **186** may vary and cause a less uniform velocity profile of the exhaust flow **154** radially between the outer boundary **156** and the inner boundary **158**. Accordingly, the pressure, and an associated effect on the mass flow rate or velocity of the outer boundary gas flow **189** from the jet exit **187**, may be adjusted to provide a predetermined flow along the local surface **175** with an associated affect on the outward flow of a portion of the exhaust flow **154**. In particular, when the inlet temperature is lower, e.g., on colder days, the exhaust flow **154** will tend to have more flow towards the inner boundary **158** versus the outer boundary **156**, i.e., have a greater tendency to follow the contour of the tail cone **174**, and the controller **195** may control the valve **193** to increase the outer boundary gas flow **189** through the jet exit **187** to provide additional energization to the boundary layer along the local surface **175** and reduce the tendency of the exhaust flow **154** to detach from the inner surface **164** of the diverging region **186**. On the other hand, for warmer inlet temperatures, e.g., on hotter days, it may be desirable to decrease the outer boundary gas flow **189** through the jet exit **187** to decrease the additional energization of the boundary layer at the local surface **175**. In addition, during off-design conditions, due either to changes in ambient temperature or a change in the power output of the turbine engine, the flow will also tend to have more swirl than at design conditions, with a corresponding non-uniform velocity profile of the exhaust gas flow between the outer boundary **156** and the inner boundary **158**. The swirl will act to pull flow away from the hub/tail cone (**168**,**174**) which may then require a reduced flow from the jet exit **187** to compensate for this. Hence, the controller **195** may operate to automatically change the effect provided by the jet exit **187** to optimize the flow characteristics through the diffuser section **150** to improve the efficiency of the turbine engine by effecting a variation in the affect of the outer boundary **156** of the diverging region **186** relative to the affect of the inner boundary **158** while operating with a fixed geometry for the outer and inner boundaries **156**, **158**.

It will be appreciated that an exhaust diffuser system according to the above described aspects of the invention can provide significant benefits. For instance, the power and efficiency of a gas turbine engine can be increased by raising the static pressure recovery of the exhaust diffuser. Further, the need for a long hub without incurring a pressure recovery penalty can be minimized, and possibly eliminated. In addition, the loss in pressure incurred by flow in an annular diffuser at the end of the hub can be reduced. Hence, an exhaust diffuser configured according to the above described aspects of the invention can achieve the performance of a long hub system while enjoying the costs of a short hub system.

Referring to FIGS. **6** and **6**A, further aspects of the invention are illustrated comprising an alternative configuration of the aspects described with reference to FIG. **5**. In the aspects illustrated in both FIGS. **6** and **6**A, an alternative hub **168*b*** is provided including an extended or long hub **168*b***, and including an outer boundary **156** having an inner peripheral surface **164*b*** incorporating the jet exit **187** described with reference to FIG. **5**.

The aspects of the invention illustrated in FIGS. **6** and **6**A provide a configuration in which the length of the hub **168*b*** is substantially longer than the radius of the hub **168*b***, and the length of the tail cone **174** is substantially less than that of the hub **168*b***, in contrast to aspects described above. However, the present aspects of the invention provide improved performance for longer exhaust diffuser sections **150** than those described in the preceding embodiments. Also, the long exhaust diffuser section **150** may necessitate provision of downstream support struts **171** to provide further support for the additional length of the hub **168***b*.

In the configuration of FIG. **6**, it may be noted that the radially innermost point **188***b* of the region **182** is located at an axial location substantially similar to that described above for aspects of the invention illustrated in FIGS. **2-5**. Specifically, the radially inner most point **188***b* of the region **182** generally may be located substantially aligned with the downstream end **178** of the tail cone **174**, or may be located proximately upstream of the downstream end **178** of the tail cone **174**.

FIG. **6**A illustrates an exemplary alternative location of the radially innermost point **188***b* of the region **182** positioned slightly upstream of the upstream end **176** of the tail cone **174**. It may be desirable to provide an upstream location of the innermost point **188***b* along the tail cone **174**, i.e., closer to the upstream end **176** of the tail cone **174**, in a diffuser section **150** having a long hub design and in which a larger spacing is provided between the outer boundary **156** and the inner boundary **158**. It should be understood that for any of the aspects of the invention described above with regard to FIGS. **2-6** and **6**A, the axial location of the innermost point **188***b* of the region **182** may be adjusted, such as within a range between the locations illustrated in FIGS. **6** and **6**A, depending on various design factors including, for example, the radial size, shape and length of the exhaust diffuser section **150**, and the design velocity for exhaust gas passing through the exhaust diffuser section **150**, as well as any other factors affecting flow through the exhaust diffuser section **150**.

While particular embodiments of the present invention have been illustrated and described, it would be obvious to those skilled in the art that various other changes and modifications can be made without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention. It is therefore intended to cover in the appended claims all such changes and modifications that are within the scope of this invention.

What is claimed is:

1. An exhaust diffuser for a turbine engine comprising:

an inner boundary defined at least by a hub, the hub having an upstream end and a downstream end;

an outer boundary defined by a diffuser shell, the outer boundary being radially spaced from the inner boundary so that a flow path is defined therebetween, the outer boundary having a radially inwardly extending region in which the outer boundary extends radially inwardly toward the inner boundary, wherein the radially inwardly extending region begins at a point that is one of substantially aligned and proximately upstream of the downstream end of the hub, whereby the outer boundary directs at least a portion of an exhaust flow in the diffuser toward the hub;

at least one gas jet including a jet exit located on the outer boundary, the jet exit discharging a flow of gas downstream substantially parallel to an inner surface of the outer boundary to effect a radially outward flow of a portion of the exhaust flow in the diffuser toward the outer boundary; and

a tail cone having an upstream end and a downstream end, the upstream end having a greater diameter than the downstream end, wherein the upstream end of the tail cone is attached to the downstream end of the hub and the inner boundary is also defined by the tail cone, wherein the flow path has an associated total flow area that varies along the length of the exhaust diffuser, and the total flow area decreases in an area adjacent the tail cone and the total flow area of the flow path increases immediately downstream of the tail cone.

2. The exhaust diffuser of claim **1**, wherein the radially inwardly extending region has a radially innermost point at a downstream end of the radially inwardly extending region, and the flow of gas from the jet exit is discharged at or downstream from the radially innermost point of the radially inwardly extending region.

3. The exhaust diffuser of claim **2**, wherein the jet exit is located at the radially innermost point of the radially inwardly extending region.

4. The exhaust diffuser of claim **2**, wherein the exhaust diffuser has an associated axis, and the outer boundary extends at an angle to the axis immediately downstream of the radially inwardly extending region so as to form a diverging region extending from the downstream end of the radially inwardly extending region.

5. The exhaust diffuser of claim **1** wherein the flow path has an associated total flow area that varies along the length of the exhaust diffuser, wherein the total flow area decreases in the area of the downstream end of the hub.

6. The exhaust diffuser of claim **1**, wherein the jet exit comprises an annular slot formed around a periphery of the outer boundary.

7. The exhaust diffuser of claim **1** wherein the exhaust diffuser has an associated axis, wherein the outer boundary extends at an angle to the axis approximately downstream of the radially inwardly extending region so as to form a diverging region.

8. The exhaust diffuser of claim **1** wherein the outer boundary has an initial diverging region transitioning into the radially inwardly extending region.

9. A method of exhaust diffusion in a turbine engine comprising the steps of:

providing a turbine engine having a turbine section and an exhaust diffuser section, the exhaust diffuser section including an inner boundary defined by a centerbody having an upstream end and a downstream end, the exhaust diffuser section further including an outer boundary radially spaced from the inner boundary so that a flow path is defined therebetween;

supplying turbine exhaust gas flow to the flow passage;

directing at least a portion of the exhaust flow radially inwardly toward the centerbody wherein the directing is performed by the outer boundary in a radially inwardly extending region in which the outer boundary extends radially inwardly toward the centerbody, and wherein the directing further includes, prior to directing the portion of exhaust flow radially inwardly, directing at least a portion of the exhaust flow radially outwardly by the outer boundary diverging radially outwardly in an upstream radially outward extending region that extends axially up to the radially inwardly extending region; and

providing a flow of gas discharged into the flow path parallel to the outer boundary to effect a radially outward flow of at least a portion of the exhaust gas flow toward the outer boundary to balance an aerodynamic loading between the outer and inner boundaries.

10. The method of claim **9**, including determining a condition affecting at least one property of the exhaust gas flow supplied to an inlet of the exhaust diffuser section and corresponding to a non-uniform velocity profile of the exhaust gas flow between the outer boundary and the inner boundary, and changing the flow of gas discharged parallel to the outer boundary in response to a change in the at least one property of the exhaust gas flow supplied to an inlet of the exhaust diffuser section.

11. The method of claim **10**, wherein the condition affecting the at least one property of the exhaust gas flow supplied to the inlet of the exhaust diffuser section comprises an ambient temperature of air entering the turbine engine.

12. The method of claim **10**, wherein the condition affecting the at least one property of the exhaust gas flow supplied to the inlet of the exhaust diffuser section comprises a change in power output of the turbine engine.

13. The method of claim **9**, wherein the radially inwardly extending region includes an innermost point of the region, and a jet exit discharging the flow of gas parallel to the outer boundary is located proximate to the innermost point or downstream from the innermost point within approximately one radii of the outermost boundary.

14. The method of claim **9**, wherein the exhaust diffuser has an associated axis, and the outer boundary extends at an angle to the axis approximately downstream of the radially inwardly extending region so as to form a diverging region extending from the downstream end of the radially inwardly extending region.

15. An exhaust diffuser for a turbine engine comprising:

an inner boundary defined at least by a hub, the hub having an upstream end and a downstream end;

an outer boundary defined by a diffuser shell, the outer boundary being radially spaced from the inner boundary so that a flow path is defined therebetween, the outer boundary having a radially inwardly extending region in which the outer boundary extends radially inwardly toward the inner boundary, wherein the radially inwardly extending region begins at a point that is one of substantially aligned and proximately upstream of the downstream end of the hub, whereby the outer boundary directs at least a portion of an exhaust flow in the diffuser toward the hub;

at least one gas jet including a jet exit located on the outer boundary, the jet exit discharging a flow of gas downstream substantially parallel to an inner surface of the outer boundary to effect a radially outward flow of a portion of the exhaust flow in the diffuser toward the outer boundary;

a tail cone having an upstream end and a downstream end, the upstream end having a greater diameter than the downstream end, wherein the upstream end of the tail cone is attached to the downstream end of the hub and the inner boundary is also defined by the tail cone; and

wherein the radially inwardly extending region has a radially innermost point, wherein the radially innermost point is substantially aligned with or proximately upstream of the downstream end of the tail cone.

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